

# Maurice Hinchey NEWS

## 26<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, NEW YORK

---

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
July 11, 2001

Contact: Kevin O'Connell  
202-225-6335

### HINCHEY AMENDMENT PRESERVES HERITAGE RIVER INITIATIVE FOR HUDSON

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today succeeded in preserving the American Heritage Rivers Initiative (AHRI) for the Hudson River. Hinchey added an amendment to the Agriculture Appropriations bill to ensure that the initiative continues for the Hudson and for the Upper Susquehanna/Lackawanna Rivers.

"In light of President Bush's rhetoric, it is ironic that the administration has become intent on eliminating this voluntary and locally driven program," said Hinchey. "The American Heritage Rivers Initiative is a perfect example of a community driven initiative that stresses cutting out the bureaucratic barriers to effective local participation, making government work better and cost less, and coordinating the government's many resources more effectively. The Initiative has met with great success in its early stages and it makes no sense to stop this progress now."

The American Heritage Rivers Initiative was created in 1997 to provide special recognition to outstanding American rivers and river communities by designating them as "American Heritage Rivers." One hundred twenty six rivers in 46 states were nominated for this designation. The fourteen river systems chosen for the Initiative represent a diverse array of the nation's urban and rural environments, river habitats and waterfront communities. The designations came with no new federal funds, but each of these rivers was assigned a "river navigator" to coordinate the efforts to improve them. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), provides the river navigators for the Hudson and the Upper Susquehanna/Lackawanna designations.

As a member of the Agriculture Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee Hinchey submitted written questions to Veneman after an April budget hearing. He noted that the administration's budget plan zeroed out NRCS's participation in the Heritage Rivers Initiative and asked Veneman what would happen to the two river navigators. Veneman responded that the contract for the navigator position on the Upper Susquehanna/Lackawanna project would not be extended and that the NRCS employee currently assigned as river navigator for the Hudson would now take responsibility for both rivers and would be limited to working on USDA-authorized programs.

"The response from Secretary Veneman and the language in USDA's budget request made it clear that the Bush Administration sought to eliminate the American Heritage Rivers Initiative,"

Hinchey added. "This amendment will make it impossible for that to happen as far as the Hudson River is concerned."

Hinchey offered his amendment during debate on the Agriculture Appropriations bill on the floor of the House on Wednesday morning. Rep. Henry Bonilla (R-TX), the Chairman of the Agriculture Subcommittee, thanked Hinchey for the amendment and accepted it. Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), the Ranking Democratic Member of the subcommittee, rose and praised Hinchey for his "persevering record" on AHRI.

"No member has fought harder for this program than Congressman Hinchey," said Kaptur. "The people of New York have sent the right man here to represent them."

The amendment then passed by voice vote and was added to the spending bill. The bill is expected to pass on Wednesday evening.

-30-